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Navy Command

BULWARK HOSTS THEOLOGICAL THINK TANK

A unique theological symposium involving several leading theologians speaking on issues of faith, war and peace took place in the warship HMS BULWARK on Ash Wednesday. The symposium, which grew out of the ship's affiliation with County Durham and was chaired by the Bishop of Durham, involved senior officers from the Naval Service and Army as well as a number of naval chaplains, including the Chaplain of the Fleet.



Short papers were given by the Bishop of Bath and Wells, Professor Oliver O'Donovan (Edinburgh University), Nigel Biggar (Regius Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology at Oxford), and Canon Nicholas Sagovsky (Westminster Abbey). The papers and the ensuing dialogue between the theologians and the military representatives considered the legitimacy of military power and how it should be used, with particular focus on recent and current conflicts. Discussions centred around the role and limitations of international law, the discriminate use of force, a Christian critique of the use of military power and the use of military power from an Augustinian perspective. Also represented were the Armed Forces Christian Union and Acts MMI - a charity supporting Christian Ministry to the Military on an international basis, which was also financial sponsor for the symposium. The symposium was hosted by the Commanding Officer of HMS BULWARK, Captain Gavin Pritchard OBE Royal Navy. Although held under Chatham House Rules, a summary of the discussions is likely to be published, and it is hoped that similar symposia might take place in the future.

HMS BULWARK is the Royal Navy's newest Commando Assault and Command and Control ship. Launched in November 2001 she has a ship's company of 390, a quarter of whom are made up from 4 Assault Squadron Royal Marines (4 ASRM). In addition the ship can carry up to 200 marines in dedicated accommodation for long periods and another 500 in austere conditions for short periods. Her flight deck can accommodate two chinook or two merlin helicopters. A large floodable dock holds four large landing craft – with another four carried on davits on the ship's side. Photographs and further details are available at www.royalnavy.mod.uk (Assault Ships-HMS BULWARK). Additional requests for information should be directed to the Defence Press Office (Devonport) +44 (0)1752 – 554558 / 554344 Mobile +44(0)7850 60068. E-mail: boswellg@a.dii.mod.uk